

September 21, 2010

Michigan House Transportation Committee

RE: COMPLETE STREETS, H.B. 4958, 4959 and 4960

Dear Committee Members,

Representing bicycle shop owners from across the state of Michigan, we would like to voice our support for the proposed the Bike Safety Curriculum in Driver's Education (H.B. 4960) and Vulnerable User (H.B. 4958 and 4959) legislation in front of this Committee today.

We want to thank the committee for passing the Complete Streets legislation in late June. This legislation will help make our streets safer and more accessible to all roadway users, regardless of age or ability. However, our streets will never become truly complete without proper education and stricter enforcement. No amount of bike lanes, curb ramps or smooth sidewalks can completely remove the threat of injuries and crashes to vulnerable roadway users. Such infrastructure must be paired with comprehensive education and enhanced penalties, in order to make our communities safer and healthier.

Safety remains one of the top concerns of pedestrians and bicyclists. The Office of Highway Safety Planning (OHSP) reported that in 2008, **2,084** bicyclists and **2,036** pedestrians were involved in motor vehicle crashes. That same year, **25%** of all fatalities in motor vehicle crashes were bicyclists or pedestrians. It's no surprise that one of the number one questions customers ask us is, "Where can we safely ride our bikes?"

One of the best and most effective ways to reduce such fatalities is by properly educating young drivers that bicyclists have equal rights and responsibilities to our roadways. Many times, crashes occur because motorists have never been taught how to share roads with bicyclists. Police reported that **68%** of bicyclists killed in motor vehicle crashes were "just going straight ahead" prior to crash (OHSP). H.B. 4960, which mandates a strong bicycle safety component be included in driver's education curriculum, will protect motorists and bicyclists alike.

Sometimes, however, education simply isn't enough to prevent dangerous behavior. A more comprehensive driver's education curriculum will not help the thousands of Michiganders who already have their driver's licenses. Stricter punishments for drivers who injure or kill a bicyclist or pedestrian will help to discourage others from driving as recklessly. H.B. 4958 and 4959 will give prosecutors and judges additional flexibility to charge and punish offenders. These bills are consistent with the laws established by Public Act No. 103 (2001), for drivers who injure or kill farm-vehicle operators.

As it stands, many of the drivers involved in accidents with pedestrians and bicyclists are rarely prosecuted. Some receive little more than a slap on the wrist. And those who are convicted can serve as little as a few days or months for seriously injuring or killing a bicyclist. This is why judges and prosecutors need better tools for controlling aggressive and reckless driving behavior.

We strongly support H.B. 4958, 4959 and 4960. Comprehensive education and stricter punishments will help reduce the needless injuries and deaths of bicyclists and other vulnerable roadway users. This committee has already voiced its support for Complete Streets legislation. You understand the need for such legislation, and the numerous benefits it will provide. But know that no street will ever be complete if nothing is done to help prevent the number of injuries and deaths of vulnerable roadway users.

Sincerely,

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